Refuting the usage of emojis
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The Prohibition of Emojis and depictions resembling beings with a soul and Refutation of Those Who Permit Them

Recently, not due to sincere Ijtihad but in the most part due to desires have many people attempted to grasp at straws just to permit what is sinful in the Shari'ah by using some of the most horrid arguments, one of the matters being animated pictures resembling creatures with a soul (animals, humans, insects,)

This is not to say that we should automatically accuse others of being sinners, as it is known that many people are ignoramuses on this topic and restrict the prohibition of Tasweer (image making) to merely making idols, without a single shred of evidence. And here this topic will be clarified so that the truth be established against our opponents

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The Basis of Prohibition: Taswir (Images of Living Beings)

Taswir in Arabic is making a Surah (image) and a Surah (image) is in general everything that resembles something, it is not limited to sculptures and drawings
Meaning of “Taswīr” (Image-making) in Language
The word ṣuwar (plural of ṣūrah) refers to a form, shape, or depiction, and is pronounced with either a kasrah or ḍammah on the letter ṣād (and some say it is triliteral).
It means the shape, outline, or drawing.
References: Lisān al-ʻArab (2/492), al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ (p. 373).

Taswīr linguistically applies to any kind of shaping, forming, or depicting — whether it be sculpted, drawn, or designed. This linguistic meaning is general, including both three-dimensional and flat images. All are called ṣūrah (image) in language usage.
Reference: Muʻjam al-Fuqahāʼ (p. 278).

In Muʻjam al-Fuqahāʼ (p. 278) it says:

“A ṣūrah is a shape of one of Allah’s created beings, whether three-dimensional (like an idol) or not.”

The Prophet ﷺ clearly prohibited images of living beings:
أَبُو طَلْحَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ صَاحِبُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَكَانَ قَدْ شَهِدَ بَدْرًا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَّهُ قَالَ " لاَ تَدْخُلُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ بَيْتًا فِيهِ كَلْبٌ وَلاَ صُورَةٌ ". يُرِيدُ التَّمَاثِيلَ الَّتِي فِيهَا الأَرْوَاحُ.

Abu Talha, a companion of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and one of those who fought at Badr together with Allah's Apostle told me that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said. "Angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or a picture" He meant the images of creatures that have souls.
Sahih al-Bukhari 4002
Imam Ibn Hazm said, “It is forbidden for us to drive away the angels from our homes, as they are the Messengers of Allah, Almighty, and a means of drawing closer to Him, Almighty, through their presence.”
Al-Muḥallā bil Athar 7/516
حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى، وَأَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ وَزُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ قَالَ يَحْيَى أَخْبَرَنَا وَقَالَ الآخَرَانِ، حَدَّثَنَا وَكِيعٌ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ، عَنْ حَبِيبِ بْنِ أَبِي ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَبِي وَائِلٍ، عَنْ أَبِي، الْهَيَّاجِ الأَسَدِيِّ قَالَ قَالَ لِي عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ أَلاَّ أَبْعَثُكَ عَلَى مَا بَعَثَنِي عَلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنْ لاَ تَدَعَ تِمْثَالاً إِلاَّ طَمَسْتَهُ وَلاَ قَبْرًا مُشْرِفًا إِلاَّ سَوَّيْتَهُ . وَحَدَّثَنِيهِ أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ خَلاَّدٍ الْبَاهِلِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، - وَهُوَ الْقَطَّانُ - حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، حَدَّثَنِي حَبِيبٌ، بِهَذَا الإِسْنَادِ وَقَالَ وَلاَ صُورَةً إِلاَّ طَمَسْتَهَا .
Narrated by Yahya ibn Yahya, and Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, and Zuhayr ibn Harb, who said:
Yahya said: Akhbarana (he informed us), and the others said: Haddathana (he narrated to us) — Waki‘, from Sufyan, from Habib ibn Abi Thabit, from Abu Wa’il, from Abu al-Hayyaj al-Asadi, who said:

‘Ali ibn Abi Talib said to me:

“Shall I not send you on the same mission as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent me? —
That you do not leave any statue (or image) without obliterating it, and no raised grave without leveling it.”

And Abu Bakr ibn Khallad al-Bahili narrated to us, saying:
Yahya — meaning Yahya al-Qattan — narrated to us, Sufyan narrated to us, from Habib, with this same chain, but he added:

“…and no picture (ṣūrah) without erasing it.”
Sahih Muslim 969a, 969b

From these narrations, it is clear that all depictions of creatures with a soul are prohibited, regardless of context or medium. Whether it be 2 dimensional or 3 dimensional images

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Why Emojis Fall Under This Ruling

Emojis often depict faces, gestures, or body parts, all of which represent living beings or their parts. According to the fiqh principle of the whole and its parts, a whole is nothing other than its parts, the image is nothing other than its parts which make it up, and all such depictions are prohibited, and with Allah lies all success

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Refuting Common excuses

Excuse 1: “An emoji doesn’t look like a real face/creature; it’s just lines or symbols.”

Refutation:

The prohibition of images does not depend on realism or artistic quality. Hadiths do not limit the ruling to realistic depictions.

Even stylized or partial representations, like a hand emoji or a smiley face, are considered taswir, because they depict a being with a soul.

The usul al-fiqh principle of parts and whole confirms that even a part (e.g., a face or hand) is included under the ruling because it symbolically represents a living being.

Digital format does not exempt it. Whether on a screen, paper, or any device, the ruling remains.
Our opponents who also argue with this nonsense must according to the implications of their beliefs also say "urine is not impure it's just a few molecules which make the water different"
If they reject this then they will thereby also reject their false reductionist fallacy, just as words written in ink marks are still language and not "just ink" no one stupid enough can argue that "it is just lines and colors and not a face"

Excuse 2: “It’s just a digital symbol, harmless fun.”

Refutation:

The essence of taswir is representation, not medium.

The Prophet ﷺ prohibited images regardless of whether they were on fabric, wood, or elsewhere. A digital emoji still qualifies as a representation of a living being.

Excuse 3: "It's okay to draw them aslong as you cover the eyes or face"
Refutation:

This argument of our opponents contains several falsehoods which will be clarified below, إن شاء الله تعالى

The narration attributed to the Prophet ﷺ , wherein he said, “The ṣūrah is the head, if the head is cut, there is no ṣūrah.”

This narration is only narrated in marfū’ form through the ṭarīq of ‘Adī Ibn Al-Faḍl > Ayyūb > ‘Ikrimah > Ibn ‘Abbās > The Prophet ﷺ. In 291 of Abū Bakr Al-Ismā’ilī’s mu’jam.

‘Adī Ibn Al-Faḍl is weak there is not a single tawthīq of him, there is instead an agreement on his weakness by everyone.

The only reason Al-Albānī declared this authentic is because he said in al-silsilah al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥah narration number 1921, about this narration, “I found its sanad on the first page of the eleventh section of ’al-ḍu’afā’’ by Al-Uqaylī written in the handwriting of certain muḥaddithīn. He applied it from the ṭarīq of ‘Adī Ibn Al-Faḍl and (Isma’īl) Ibn ‘Ulayyah, both of them > Ayyub > ‘Ikrimah > Ibn Abbas > The Prophet ﷺ.”

Know, that he found Isma’īl Ibn ‘Ulayyah narrating it together with ‘Adī Ibn Al-Faḍl so ‘Adī Ibn Al-Faḍl would not be the only one narrating this anymore, but we do not know who these muḥaddithīn are that mentioned this ṭarīq he is talking about which is ibhām and ibhām is not accepted, especially since this marfū’ form of the narration in that exact manner is not found in any edition of al-ḍu’afā’ by Al-‘Uqayli and nowhere else.

And to address a critical point, the narration is regarding the ra's (head) so where did they get it from that the ruling is on removal of the face (not head) and the eyes?? (not even the majority of the head) These people are incredibly contradictory and refuge is sought with Allah from ignorance.
Excuse 4: "But Ibn Abbas said if you remove the head then it's not an image"
Refutation:
Ibn Abbas also believed that Mut'ah was Halal and opposed the Nusus out of Ta'wil or forgetfulness yet you don't follow him in that, and it has already been clarified in the book of Usul al Fiqh that Taqlid of fallible human, including Sahaba, is falsehood, and also it is authentically narrated in Sahih al Bukhari:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْوَهَّابِ، حَدَّثَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ زُرَيْعٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَوْفٌ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي الْحَسَنِ، قَالَ كُنْتُ عِنْدَ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ إِذْ أَتَاهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ يَا أَبَا عَبَّاسٍ إِنِّي إِنْسَانٌ، إِنَّمَا مَعِيشَتِي مِنْ صَنْعَةِ يَدِي، وَإِنِّي أَصْنَعُ هَذِهِ التَّصَاوِيرَ. فَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ لاَ أُحَدِّثُكَ إِلاَّ مَا سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ " مَنْ صَوَّرَ صُورَةً فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مُعَذِّبُهُ، حَتَّى يَنْفُخَ فِيهَا الرُّوحَ، وَلَيْسَ بِنَافِخٍ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ". فَرَبَا الرَّجُلُ رَبْوَةً شَدِيدَةً وَاصْفَرَّ وَجْهُهُ. فَقَالَ وَيْحَكَ إِنْ أَبَيْتَ إِلاَّ أَنْ تَصْنَعَ، فَعَلَيْكَ بِهَذَا الشَّجَرِ، كُلِّ شَىْءٍ لَيْسَ فِيهِ رُوحٌ. قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ سَمِعَ سَعِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي عَرُوبَةَ مِنَ النَّضْرِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ هَذَا الْوَاحِدَ.

Narrated by ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb:
Yazīd ibn Zurayʿ narrated to us,
ʿAwf reported to us from Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Ḥasan, who said:

“I was with Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allah be pleased with them both) when a man came to him and said:

‘O Abā al-ʿAbbās! I am a man who makes his living through the work of his hands, and I make these images (pictures/statues).’
Ibn ʿAbbās said: ‘I will not tell you anything except what I heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.
I heard him say:
“Whoever makes an image, Allah will punish him until he breathes into it a soul — and he will never be able to breathe a soul into it.”’
The man then sighed deeply and his face turned pale.
Ibn ʿAbbās said: ‘Woe to you! If you insist on making something, then make images of trees or anything that does not have a soul.’”

Sahih al-Bukhari 2225
So where are the arrogant ones who will insist upon a narration whilst ignoring others?

Excuse 5:
"It doesnt count if it's on phones!"
This is among the most baseless distinctions our opponents have come up with. We have already established the general prohibition (‘umūm) of ṣuwar that resemble creatures with a soul, regardless of the medium. Hence, this ruling remains upon its ‘umūm (generality). The burden of proof is upon the claimants to show, with clear and decisive evidence from the Qur’ān or Sunnah, that digital screens are excluded — and they will never be able to find a single proof for their false claim. And they will from the implications of their beliefs end up permitting explicit imagery as will be clarified below:
A Challenge to Those who Permit Images:
It is said to those who permit images, do you permit the depictions that resemble the awrah of humans? If they say "we prohibit it due to Qiyas of actual awrah" then why do you not oblige covering the private parts of camels, horses, donkeys and other animals as they are closer in terms of living and being creatures than a still image? It is known that the Prophet ﷺ was in the presence of animals many times and would even ride a donkey, yet no obligation was conveyed from him to cover the private parts of animals and insects. And indeed Qiyas is falsehood yet those who oppose us and freely use it to make the Halal into Haram and Haram into Halal are shameless and inconsistent in acknowledging their contradictions
And if our opponents go to lengths and become even more shameless by affirming that explicit imagery resembling awrah is permitted, then they fall into an even deeper chaotic implications which necessitate them permitting drawing such upon Masahif of Qur'an and the Masajid, and whoever permits such a thing is indeed a Kafir Apostate from the Religion of Allah, and one who commits

Istihzaa' (mockery) of the Religion. And all praise is to Allah that He saved us from misguidance like this

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Conclusion:

Based on the above:

1. All images of living beings or their parts are prohibited in Islam.

2. Emojis depict parts of living beings, even if stylized, simplified, or digital.

3. Attempts to justify emojis as “harmless lines” misunderstand both hadith and usul al-fiqh principles.

References:

Sahih Bukhari 4002 – https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4002

Sahih Muslim 969a – https://sunnah.com/muslim:969a

Sahih al-Bukhari 2225

Usul al-Fiqh: Whole and parts principle – https://shamela.ws/book/1028/82#p1